

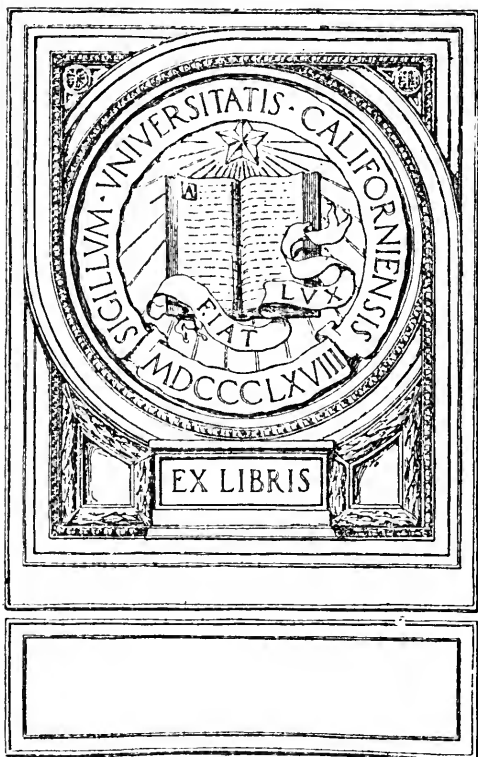
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THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION & THE WAR

BY
MICHAEL FARBMAN

*Until recently the Petrograd Correspondent
of the "Manchester Guardian"*



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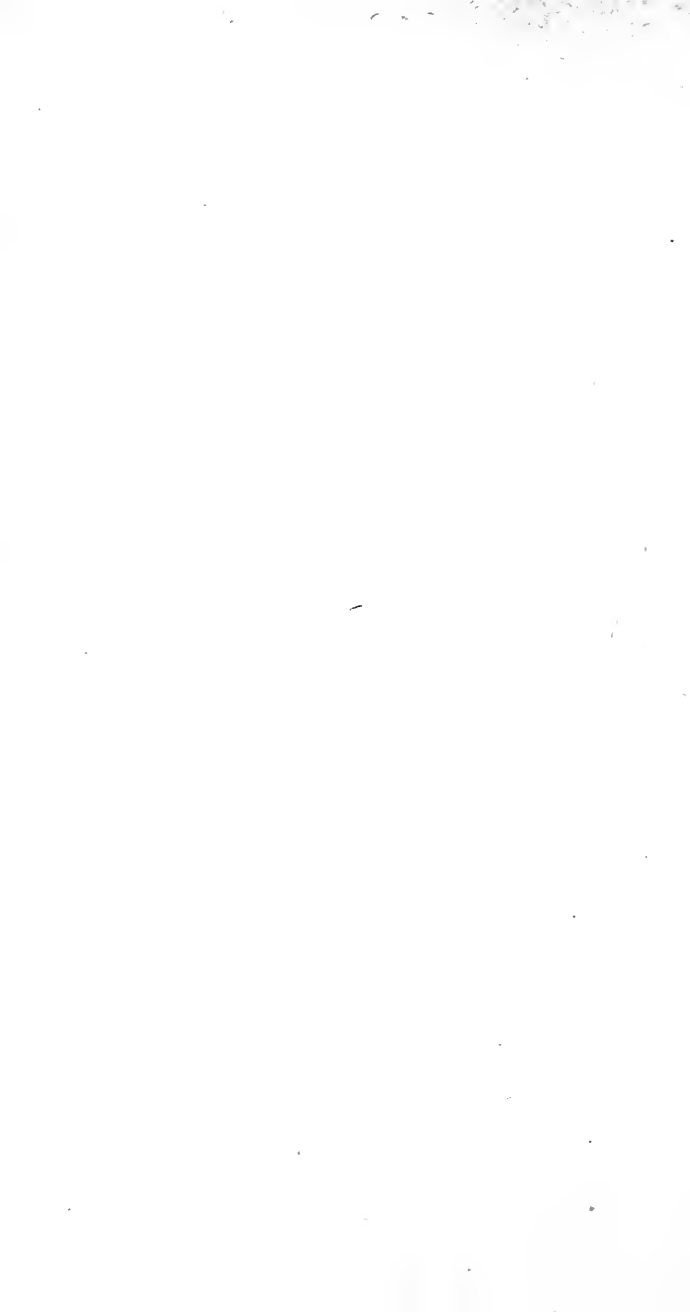
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This book is the text of a lecture for the National Council for Civil Liberties delivered on July 20th, 1917, by Michael Farbman, late Special Correspondent in Petrograd for the "Manchester Guardian."

IT must be left to the future historian to paint the complete picture of Russia before the Revolution. Russia at this moment is too engrossed with actualities, too interested in the present to turn her eyes back to the past. But for any clear understanding of how the Revolution came about, and what were the reasons that created the Revolution and why Russia took this course, it is necessary to point out, even if only in a general way, the main features of Russian public life at the moment of the fall of the Monarchy.

It seems to be the popular idea that the Revolution was caused by the pro-Germanism of the Court and Government. According to this notion the army and the people, full of anger at the shameless betrayal of the national cause, arose and swept the Monarchy away from the path to national victory. Now there can be no doubt that the pro-Germanism of the Court and the Government's treachery did in fact hasten the catastrophe. But it is equally beyond doubt that the old *régime* fell, not merely because of its pro-Germanism and its intended treachery to the

national cause, but mainly because it was autocratic. The war revealed not merely the pro-Germanism of the Court and the guiltiness of the Government, but the complete bankruptcy of the autocratic *régime*. The autocracy had petered out. All strength and vitality, if ever it possessed any, had gone out of it. It was not merely a corpse, but a decomposing corpse. The pillars of the system had crumbled into decay. The whole structure was in a state of disintegration. Its very foundation—the army—had gone from under it.

It is easy to understand the tragedy of the army. After two and a half years of unparalleled sacrifices, heroism and endurance, the army felt itself morally weakened and humiliated. It was conscious that all its sufferings and reverses were not its own fault, but the result solely of the inefficiency and incapacity and guilty neglect of the authorities. The blind obedience, the unquestioning devotion and unlimited fidelity, traditional to the Russian soldier, was shaken. In its

place there grew up distrust, and something more than distrust, a vague, instinctive hatred of authority, an inarticulate and hidden resistance.

At this stage the army began to disintegrate, to rot away. Soldiers began to desert *en masse* for the rear, returning to their villages. No figures are available, but on the authority of people who know the situation, these desertions became a problem of extreme gravity. The military authorities could think of only one way of stopping this rot—to tighten up discipline—and one should know what discipline meant in the old days, to realise what severity is implied in this statement. Of course it only made things worse.

But if the army (the foundation of auto-
cracy) was disintegrating, it may be said
that the whole civil structure was in a
state of dangerous decay. Favouritism and
corruption flourished as never before in
Russia. I shall give only one instance, but
it is a sufficiently illuminating one. So flag-
rant was the scandal, and so great the gene-
ral indignation that it was one of the most

notorious reactionary deputies himself who delivered a scathing indictment of the Government in the matter in a speech in the Duma almost on the eve of the Revolution. Several years ago General Voyekoff, a famous courtier and aide-de-camp of the Tsar, discovered on his estate at Kuvaka a mineral table-water spring (this, by the way, is the same general who urged the Tsar after the Revolution to "open the Minsk front" and let the Germans through to crush the Revolution). Thanks to the influence of the general and his high protectors this table-water obtained a great vogue. It was named after the estate Kuvaka, and its label was to be seen in every restaurant. Vast quantities of it were exported in long trains from the general's estate. During the most tragic days of the war, when the utter breakdown of the transport system had made it extremely difficult to supply the troops with food and ammunition, the Tsar's friend calmly continued his lucrative business, and the long trains of wagons, loaded with Kuvaka table-water, proceeded regularly as before along

the railway lines to Petrograd. Particular indignation was caused by the fact that the railway trucks were boldly placarded with the popular legend "Kuvaka." It is hardly possible to imagine such a thing in England without an immense scandal. In Russia it made no particular stir. Even the Duma outburst fell flat.

It was only one out of many such affairs. Everywhere it was the same. The psychology of those in power or with influence of any kind had nothing in it of what you in England call "public spirit." Russia was their patrimony, to be exploited for their individual benefit, and they exploited it to the full. As for State officials, from the highest to the lowest, there was no limit to their rapacity and insolence. High Government officials bullied and terrorised bankers and rich manufacturers under blackmail and threat of arrest. These same bankers and industrials were making enormous almost legendary profits to the growing indignation of the nation. To calm popular irritation the Government appointed

a Commission of Investigation. But the Commission appointed by Stuermer to investigate the banks became itself a black-mailing agency. The bankers had only to bribe the President of the Commission (a well-known general) and his fellows in order to escape censure. One of the most corrupt bankers in Petrograd was actually arrested in order to encourage the others to pay up. The Commission itself is now under trial and the forthcoming revelations may be expected to enrich criminal history with one of its choicest episodes. Already the trial of the notorious Mannsievitch Manuilov, one of the main black-mailing agents of this Commission, which took place just before the Revolution, is felt as a national nightmare.

The stories revealed in the evidence would be quite incredible were they not official facts, and would give the impression of a diseased imagination at work rather than of real happenings of contemporary history. But the bankers and industrials, thus systematically plundered by Government officials, compensated

themselves in their turn by exploiting the population. The great industries had always had the patronage of the authorities before the war; during the war their profiteering was without check or limit. For these profiteers the people coined a vivid and true expression. They called them "the marauders of the rear," rightly considering them as being as morally degraded as the marauders of the battle-field, as the ghouls who plunder the wounded and dying.

The whole economy of State was conducted on lines of plunder. There was no system of State finance that could be so described. System had entirely gone out of the national finances, and the expression "State finance" had become an anachronism. To borrow money and to exploit the printing press—this was the sum total of the financial wisdom of the Tsardom. In two and a half years of war the State debt of Russia, which was the highest in the world before the war, increased fourfold. Instead of a finance policy the Government flooded

the country with paper money, issued in contravention of the law, and this mad dance of paper millions led to an incredible Bacchanalia of profits. The soldiers, being half serfs, received nothing, a mere few pence a month. Their wives, mothers and children actually died of hunger on the poor separation allowances made to soldiers' dependents. Workers got beggarly wages. And yet the country was swamped with millions. Joint-stock companies issued new stocks, doubling and trebling their capitals. Throughout the country rumours ran of legendary incomes and monstrous profits. The truth was fantastic enough, but rumour made it even more fantastic. It spoke of stupendous salaries taken by bank and company directors, of salaries of millions a year. The situation of Russia was thoroughly unhealthy, in a state of disease. In the midst of this most terrible war and amid the general impoverishment, an unprecedented business was done in jewellery, expensive furs and articles of luxury. It was the prevailing fashion, one might al-

most call it the prevailing sport, in the vast army of profiteers, contractors, and the *nouveaux riches* to pay fabulous prices for champagne and foreign liquors, simply because their sale and consumption were prohibited by law.

This Bacchanalia of millions spread even to the newspaper world too. The newspapers of Russia hitherto had been in the best sense of the word non-capitalistic undertakings, but on the eve of the Revolution a sensation was made in Russia by the news of the foundation by Protopopoff of a new great daily that reeked of millions. It was recognised as a challenge to the good traditions of the Russian Press.

The peasants, who in the first year of war had benefited from the great Government orders and had begun for the first time in their lives to have a surplus for saving, discovered by and by that in spite of the plentifulness of money they were no better off; on the contrary, they found that their condition was becoming worse, that it was becoming more

and more difficult to buy for money the necessities of their peasant life and work—vehicles, horseshoes, nails, ropes, shoes, clothing. In consequence, the longer the war went on the more reluctant they became to sell their grain. Money had become useless to them; they would have been glad to exchange their grain for the things they needed, but these they could not buy in the market and the State was unable to provide them. The result was that the peasants began to hoard and even to hide their stocks of grain “for a rainy day,” all the more so as the crops were diminishing every year of the war. The reduction of the yield was due to several causes. First there was the mobilisation of the peasantry, which robbed the land of labour and left the cultivation of the soil principally to women; then the requisitioning by the army of vast numbers of horses was another crippling factor. A third cause was that the stock of agricultural machinery was diminishing through wear and tear and could not be replaced. Soon actual dearth ensued. It was steadily augmented

by three factors: actual diminution of yield, the depreciation of the currency and the breakdown of transport.

The story of the breakdown of transport, which did the greatest possible injury to the conduct of the war, is worth telling because it is extraordinarily instructive. In any case, the mere fact of war and its demands would have created a serious shortage of rolling-stock and confusion in railway transport. But there can be no doubt that the principal factor in creating the utter collapse of the railway system was the crazy mismanagement of the authorities. There was almost wholesale destruction of rolling-stock through sheer incompetence. I well remember a story which shocked Petrograd early in 1915 during the struggles for Warsaw. The War Office had to despatch strong reinforcements to the front at maximum speed. All traffic was stopped on the Petrograd-Warsaw Railway, and to double the carrying capacity the military authorities used both lines for traffic in the one direction. The consequence

was a stupendous block of empty trains at their destination. With both lines packed with rolling-stock and fresh trains arriving all the time there was no other way of relieving the block and making room for the new arrivals than to hurl everything over the embankments and scrap enormous quantities of rolling-stock. Vast numbers of railway coaches too were used as shelters for the troops during the winter. But by far the great mass of lost rolling and engine stock was left to the enemy in the retreats, together with vast quantities of food supplies. Eventually the carrying capacity of the railways fell so low that the Government introduced quite a novel scheme: the so-called "goods-traffic weeks." When Petrograd or the front was in danger of hunger or a shortage, the Government would prohibit all passenger traffic in certain zones for a week or a fortnight at a time and use the lines solely for goods and supplies. It is easy to imagine how this clever device influenced the economic situation in Russia.

The food shortage assumed dangerous dimensions, but the only food policy of the Government was to repress every effort by the nation to find a remedy. Any popular initiative for any purpose was promptly repressed by the Government. Only charity or Red Cross organisations were tolerated, and even barely tolerated at that. The Zemstvos and Town Councils were simply detested by the Government. Their efforts were hampered in every way. They would have been suppressed but for the worship the soldiers had for them after experience of the good they had done. But the most grotesque instance was the hostility of the Government towards the popular movement embodied in the War Industries Committees, which was started to mobilise and organise the production of munitions all over the country—a most necessary task in view of the failure of the Government. It was first a case of jealousy and then of fear. The Government was afraid of any popular organisations, and particularly of any popular demonstration of the national ability to do better

than the Government. The Committees were put under suspicion of having revolutionary tendencies, and every effort was made to diminish their importance.

Even the Fourth Duma, elected, as it was, on the basis of Stolypin's electoral *coup d'état* and representing privileged classes, which had been through all its years of existence thoroughly obedient and willing to do all the Government might wish, was so humiliated and insulted that it was driven perforce into a revolutionary attitude.

Life had become intolerable. Everywhere there was suspicion of treason, and actual treason everywhere. Everywhere there was mutual hatred. And high over it all and as a symbol of it all was a dastardly Government and a putrescent Court anxious only for its own preservation at any price. If Russia on the eve of the Revolution was a living organism in its agony, the Monarchy was a putrifying corpse.

* * *

Now it should be clearly understood

that the Russian Revolution was not intended merely as a means for the better prosecution of the war. Nevertheless, it has been so interpreted by the Western Allies. The first disappointment for New Russia was to find that the Revolution was regarded in the West from this utilitarian point of view. In London and Paris there was joy over the Revolution, because people expected that freedom would strengthen Russia's fighting power. It is not in my mind to-day to lay blame for this misreading of the Revolution, the less so as this utilitarian conception of Russian freedom did not originate in the West. We know that the formula "Freedom for Victory" had long been the device of the Imperialist wing of Russian Liberalism. For two years their opposition to the Tsardom had been expressly based upon the necessity of "organising victory." If the Allied Governments and Press welcomed the Russian Revolution in the hope that it would prove the great stimulus for war to a victorious end, much the same ideas prevailed in the minds of the Russian

Liberal bourgeoisie. For the cadets and their supporters the Revolution is still but a means; their ideal is still the fight to a finish, the "knock-out blow." Without intending reproach or blame the Russian people has again and again appealed to the West to abandon this illusion. It has done so through its Government, which has sent its successive Notes to the Allies, through organisations and congresses of the army and the workers and the peasants. In every possible form of manifestation the Russian democracy has endeavoured to make clear the real meaning of the Revolution. It has sought to make the West realise that to Russia the Revolution is not a means to victory, or a means at all, but the very end in itself, and itself the sole and highest victory that European democracy has achieved in the war.

Let us try to realise what the Revolution means. For Russia the Revolution is a coming into existence. Russia had no civilisation; Russia was not a nation; she was not even a State. That sounds rather like a paradox, but it describes a genuine re-

ality. You in England can hardly imagine what it is to be Fatherlandless. Every Englishman has had his Fatherland for centuries before his birth. In Russia, generation after generation has been born and has lived and died without knowing or feeling the full happiness and joy of having a country of its very own—a Fatherland. It is very hard to describe the complex attitude of mind of the Russians who, while having a passionate love for their country, have had that love starved and made sterile. Russia was always a harsh foster-mother to the vast mass of her people. As a consequence all that appertained to the State was thought strange and alien and tainted. Anyone in the employ or service of the State was, as it were, morally degraded by the fact of such employment. There was no respect even for State property. On the contrary, if anything belonged to the State it was marked down; and there was actually encouragement to damage or destroy it. A universal saying in Russia expresses this striking attitude: "It's the Government's, smash

it!" In this popular saying you have an illuminating glimpse, not only of the wide gulf between people and State, but of the absence of any feeling that there was a State. Not only was there no eventual unity between people and State, governed and governors, there was no real feeling of unity among the people themselves, and only the most rudimentary idea of there being a State at all. The Revolution suddenly gave Russia a new aspect of life. Russia became a State, a nation, a Fatherland. The idea of the State as something hostile and alien was transformed into an idea of the State as something intimate, or, as a Russian would put it, as "our own." A fact of the Russian temperament is that it is devoid of brag. Russians, as a people, do not habitually over-estimate their gifts and talents or importance. They are far from considering themselves the salt of the earth. In Russia the conception of "Russland ueber Alles" would be quite impossible. On the contrary, Russians have a very modest opinion of them-

selves. They know very well that they have insufficient culture, that they are in the main a nation of illiterates, that in general they are behind Europe. But in Russia there is a deep faith in ideals. It is genuinely believed that life is not worth living save for an ideal. You must have something high to live for. So of Russia herself it is genuinely believed that she too must have something high in the world to live and work for. This element of faith gives a specific and passionate seriousness to every manifestation of public spirit. It is what most European students of Russia have regarded as its specific religiosity. Yet it is not ecclesiastical or theological; this spirit of religiosity or faith permeates all Russian life. For centuries Russia has been seeking the truth, believing that a time would come when the conscience would be delivered. The Revolution was the deliverance of the Russian conscience. It is now free to work for its ideals.

A vast transformation took place. The mutual hostility of which I spoke as the

characteristic of the old Russia was replaced by universal joy and love, a universal spiritual uplift. As Mr. Harold Williams said in one of his messages at that time: "Life is flowing in a healing, purifying torrent. Never was any country in the world so interesting as Russia is now. Old men are saying 'Nunc dimittis'; young men singing in the dawn; and I have met many men and women who seemed walking in a hushed sense of benediction."

From the moment of its birth the Revolution took the foremost place in the minds of all Russians. Cheidze, who, as you know, is president of the C.W.S.D., once put it to me very characteristically. "The Revolution," he said, "is to me the centre of the world, nay, of the whole planetary system. To me the Revolution is Alpha and Omega. It is my one criterion. Anything that is consonant with the Revolution and helps to consolidate it, I accept; anything that stands in the way of the Revolution or is likely to hamper it, I unreservedly reject." In these words

Cheidze defined what is felt by every Russian. For Russia, therefore, the Revolution is not merely a means for victory. It is life itself, and the very condition of living. Russia freed herself in order to realise her moral faith in the high purpose of her life. The war was not, and could not be, the aim of the Revolution. But the war existed as a fact; and as a fact it had to be faced—one that influenced the national and international significance of the Revolution.

* * *

How did the Revolution at the outset face this fact of war? In the first place it should be remembered that the war had, as it were, played itself out. The whole spirit of militarism had died away. The war was too closely identified with the Tsardom and the old régime to inspire enthusiasm. On the other hand, the upheaval had been too great; people were no longer able to concentrate their minds on the war. They were too busy about other and, to them, more important things. Finally, there was a widespread and sin-

cere belief that the Tsardom has fallen, not only for Russia, but for all Europe, and that the Revolution could not be without effect upon the German people, which was regarded as being under a yoke similar to the Tsardom. Neither was it forgotten that the Junkers and pan-Germans had made fear of the Tsardom and Russian Imperialism the main argument in popularising the war in Germany.

On March 14th—only about a fortnight after the Revolution—the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates launched that famous first appeal of theirs to the democracies of the world, calling upon them to unite in bringing about a democratic peace.

This appeal was the first clear definition of the new creed of the democracy. It contained the first embodiment of that creed in the famous formula "No annexations; no indemnities." Now this formula sounds very differently to Russian ears than in countries of a highly-developed Imperialism. In such countries it is the watch-

word only of the most advanced Socialist Minorities. In Russia it is the expression of the vague but general instinct of the broad masses of the Russian nation, which has not yet grown up into a real and active Imperialism. Whatever may be the result of the world-struggle between the Imperialistic Powers, it is certain that unless the war brings about the complete shipwreck of modern Imperialism the Russian Revolution is in peril. As a non-Imperialistic Power Russia stands to become the victim of Imperialistic Powers. She would never be partner in sharing the Imperialistic booty, she would rather be the victim. It was because this was at once instinctively perceived by Russians that the formula of "no annexations, no indemnities" was accepted so rapidly and completely by the great masses of the people. To Western Europe this formula of "no annexations, no indemnities" was most extreme, socialistic, sectarian. To Russia it was the commonplace of national thinking, the very pivot and axle of the Revolution. The European

democracy of the Imperialistic States is out to destroy German Imperialism; the Russian democracy is out to destroy Imperialism as such, because Imperialism, as such, is the enemy of democracy and of all the Russian Revolution stands for. To a Russian, the protagonists in the war are now Revolution and Imperialism. Unless the Revolution destroys Imperialism, Imperialism will destroy the Revolution.

Such is the non-Imperialist creed of the C.W.S.D. The Imperialists at once denounced it as a movement for a separate peace. There is no longer any need for argument now on this subject. It is an exploded fable and was, in fact, an invention of the Imperialists for the purpose of discrediting the democratic purpose and saving their Imperialism. Such an idea as that of a separate peace was quite impossible from the very nature of the revolutionary mind. The only peace that the Russian democracy thought of, or was capable of thinking of, was a general peace. The enemy, as I have said, was Imperialism;

how could peace be made with Imperialistic Germany!

But though there was not the least thought of a separate peace, the whole conception and mentality of the Revolution was for a speedy ending of the war. There were two factors in this conception. One was the sheer difficulty of going on with the war in face of the legacy of disorganisation left by the old *régime*—disorganisation economic, military and social. At one and the same time Russia was faced by the greatest political crisis in her history; by the financial crisis which has brought her almost to the verge of ruin; by the transport crisis, or rather breakdown; and by the economic crisis that seemed incurable. Catastrophe seemed so imminent that the only hope of salvation for Russia lay in a speedy ending of the war. That was the first factor; the second factor in this mentality was that peace really seemed attainable. It was believed that the chief obstacle to peace had been Tsarist Imperialism. With its removal the path seemed open. That West-

ern Imperialism existed too, and might prove an obstacle to peace, was well understood, but it was not regarded as an insuperable obstacle. There was faith in the democracy of the West. It was believed that the West would be kindled by the Russian Revolution—at least to sympathy. The Russian democracy would never allow France or England to be crushed by Germany with Russia standing idly by. Russia was prepared and willing to fight for them. But it was hoped that the Western democracies in their turn would put the interests of the Russian Revolution in the forefront and would eventually agree that a just, democratic peace was to be desired, if only because it meant the salvation of Russia and the consolidation of her Revolution. Separate peace would be treason not only to Russia's Allies but to the Russian Revolution itself. A general peace as soon as it could be obtained was needed for the very existence of Russia.

The difficulty was to bring this home to the Allies; to reassure them on the one hand, and to seek their collaboration on

the other. And yet the initial difficulty was discovered in Russia itself. It consisted in the attitude of M. Milyukoff and the Russian Imperialists. It became clear that the Foreign Minister was actually doing his utmost to prevent Russia's clear demand from being understood by the Allies. Nay more, he was making every effort to persuade the Allies that Russia still stood to her Imperialistic aims, including Constantinople and the dismemberment of Austria. To say that the Russian mind was astonished and shocked by this perversity would be putting it mildly. The whole thing seemed outside the domain of reason. No wonder, it was thought, that the West was so slow to respond. Here was the reason. The immediate thing to be done was obviously to remove Milyukoff. A new Government must be found that would express Russia truthfully. The way would then be clear. This new Government would easily come to an agreement with the Allies and thus help to solve the situation.

* * *

Meanwhile, during this episode two months had been wasted, and those two months in time of Revolution, when everything is unsettled, changing, in a state of flux, is a very long period. During that period the situation had grown much worse. Disorganisation had spread rapidly in the army. The financial crisis had become still more acute. The economic situation, food supply and transport, had almost reached the point of catastrophe. Russia emerged from this political crisis with a new Coalition Government representing more truly Revolutionary Russia, but weaker, less organised, less stable. In these two months Russia had been seriously robbed of her strength and her unity. It was now realised for the first time that it was not so easy after all to obtain peace. Then came a series of disappointments from outside.

The first was the cynical speech of Bethmann-Hollweg, in which he made it clear that Imperialistic Germany was not prepared to make any concessions, but that all she thought of was either

a separate peace with Russia or a general peace in which she would be the victor. But this was a sort of disappointment that tended to strengthen Russia and to intensify the spirit of revolutionary defence. It even strengthened the hope that the more headstrong and brutal German militarism remained, the sooner was internal division in Germany to be expected. Against Imperialistic Germany and its Junkers and pan-Germans Russia, moreover, still had the argument of war, and she would be glad to use that argument as a partner in a rejuvenated alliance of democracies.

But of a very different character were the disappointments that shortly after Bethmann-Hollweg's speech came from the Allies themselves. I need only recapitulate them—Lord Robert Cecil's speech in the Commons, M. Ribot's speeches in the Chamber, the vote of the French Chamber, the French refusal of passports, and the holding up of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. In appearance the speeches by the Allied statesmen

seemed to go a long way in acceptance of the Russian formula of "No annexations and no indemnities"; in reality they simply interpreted the formula away. The disillusionment in Russia was profound. Only the small Imperialist section was gratified. Their attitude was that of "I told you so." M. Milyukoff's organ, the *Retch*, came out with an exultant leader on Lord Robert Cecil's speech, pointing out how futile were the illusions of the Russian democracy. On the other hand, the democracy felt itself defeated. Its mood was almost one of despair.

* * *

Meantime the Revolution developed. It produced a rearrangement of political forces. On the one hand there was the bourgeoisie, alarmed at the new social prospect that was growing up. Its watchword was "arrest the Revolution at any price." This section is best represented by the Cadet Party, which, for years the Liberalising force in Russia, is now the Right wing in the New Russia, and may reluctantly find itself some day

at the head of the counter-revolution. The Cadets are now in open conflict with the revolutionary democracy. At the other political pole are the Extremists or Ultra-Revolutionaries, whose watchword is "Deepen the Revolution." Just as the Cadets wish to arrest the Revolution by an artificial dam, so the Maximalists desire by artificial means to add impetus to its flow and bring about the full regeneration of Society at a stroke. These people, of whom Lenin is the most conspicuous leader, constitute the Extreme Left, and their activities are just as dangerous to the safe evolution of the new *régime*, as are the counter-revolutionaries of the Right. There are further extremes both of the Right and Left, the Black Hundreds on the one hand and the Anarchists on the other, but neither of these ultra-extremists need be taken into serious account at this stage of affairs. Between these forces of counter-revolution and ultra-revolution, the Cadets and Maximalists, stands the great mass of Russian opinion, represented by the C.W.S.D.,

which seeks neither to arrest nor to exploit, to dam or to deepen the Revolution, but to allow it to develop normally and safely to the full extent of its potentialities, political and social, without endangering the stability of national life or compromising the gains that the Revolution has won. It is this central revolutionary force which is now in control of Russia and the most powerful force in its Government. The counter-revolution was a natural outcome of the social character of the Revolution. It should always be borne in mind that the Revolution is not merely a political Revolution, nor is it *the* social Revolution as conceived by a minority of Russian Socialists—but it is certainly in great measure a social Revolution. There can be no understanding of Russia to-day without recognition of this fact. Naturally it is a fact that is unpalatable to the capitalist and agrarian interests who constitute the counter-revolutionary force.

Now, in fact, the counter-revolution is very real. It has been there since the very

first days of the Revolution. But its difficulty throughout has been to know what line to take. It knew that the alliance of soldiers and workers was the granite rock of the Revolution, and its first effort was to destroy that alliance. A stream of accusations was let loose. The workers were betraying the soldiers by their selfish strikes. They were stopping the output of munitions. They were regardless of the fate of the soldiers at the front and thought only of themselves, etc. But the manœuvre did not succeed and was very soon abandoned. To show how unfounded this charge was I need only mention one fact. On the appeal of the C.W.S.D. the Petrograd workers collected in three weeks a million and a quarter roubles as a First of May Gift to the soldiers. They did this by forfeiting their pay on Saturdays and holidays, when they have to work. In face of such a voluntary sacrifice as this accusations of betrayal could hardly prosper.

Other methods were tried and dropped, and finally the counter-revolution had

recourse to the traditional weapon of reaction in Russia—anti-Semitism. A whole literature of the gutter has been started for the purpose of instilling this virus of the pogromists into Russian life. Gutter newspapers, circulating only among the lowest classes—not the workers or artisans, but the indeterminate class of the street and the market-place—have been set to work. One of them with a big circulation is jointly edited by one of the Suvorins, sons of the notorious editor of the *Novoye Vremya*, and a well-known music-hall wrestler known in familiar parlance as “Uncle Vania.” This paper and others are issuing a whole series of calumnies against the leaders of the C.W.S.D., giving lists of their alleged German-Jewish names, and alleging that the one aim of the Revolution is to secure the domination of the Jews and to reduce true Russians into the function of a subject race. These calumnies and false charges are occasionally quoted by large and more influential anti-Semitic papers and too often cabled abroad. Thus from these

sources the calumny has been spread all over the world that Lenin is not a Russian but a Jew, whose real name is Zederblum; another is that the executive of the C.W.S.D. has only one Russian in a membership of eighteen, and we even find it being stated in England by those who should know better that the majority of the Executive Committee are Jews. This propaganda of insults and lies is too despicable and worthless to deserve much consideration in itself; and it must be said in fairness that the most respectable elements in Russia would not degrade themselves by entering into controversy with this anti-Semitic mentality, which belongs rather to a zoological category than to sane politics. I only mention the agitation *en passant*, because it raises the very interesting question of the real relation of the Jews to the Revolution.

The vast majority of Jews in Russia are, in fact, to be found in association with the Liberal bourgeoisie and are supporters of the Cadet Party. They loyally supported both the First and Second

Provisional Governments like sober and respectable citizens, and they are making the greatest efforts to secure the success of the Liberty Loan. Generally they stand for maintaining the unity of the State and are opposed to centrifugal and separatist ideas. Of the Jews as a body we may expect that they will play a large part in the future reconstruction of Russia, but it cannot be said of them that they played a great and active part in the Revolution. The only Jews that took an active part in the Revolution were the small but energetic Socialist minority of Jewish idealists. If the millions of Jews of Russia have gained their freedom to-day they owe it to that minority of Jewish idealists.

Yet the very existence of these Jewish idealists is a peculiar demonstration of the force and reality of Russian idealism. Though members of an oppressed race and with every excuse for racial bitterness, they never faltered in their faith in Russia. In all the Revolutionary parties they played an active part. They went to

gaol and Siberia with their Russian fellow-revolutionaries. Yet they knew by experience that every effort of theirs would be, and was, answered by the autocracy in brutal massacre of the Jewish population at large. Had they been swayed even to the slightest degree by racial considerations they would have held their hand if only out of pity for their own race. But to them the ideal was above all, and to-day they may be proud of Russia's freedom which they helped to achieve in co-operation with the best men and women of all Russia. The old *régime* fostered mutual hatred between the races. It turned Russians against Ukrainians, Poles against Jews, Tartars against Armenians; all against all. But the Tsardom has fallen, and this inter-racial hatred is dead in Russia. Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Jews and Armenians; they are all to-day, to use Kerensky's words, "a friendly family of fraternal peoples." They trust each other without cavil or distinction or *arrière-pensée*. Not the most virulent or insidious anti-Semite poison is capable of bringing

discord into the ranks of the Revolution. To-day anti-Semitism in Russia is but a poor, shameful remnant of the old *régime*, impotent and execrated. But now that it has lost power in its native country it has begun to seek asylum in Western Europe.

It is not for me to speak of European anti-Semitism. I only ask your permission to tell you one truth that we in Russia have come to learn through heavy sacrifice. The best men in Russia, from Tolstoy to Gorky, have combated anti-Semitism, not from the humanitarian point of view, not only out of sympathy for its Jewish victims, but because the foul infection of anti-Semitism demoralised the *Russian* nation at large. Anti-Semitism is a poison that injures the oppressor rather than the oppressed.

* * *

With the political crisis of the 3rd of May—the Miliukoff incident—the romantic period of the Revolution came to an end and the period of disillusion began. This was the most difficult moment of the Revolution. It seemed as if the nation

would lapse into a state of molecular dissolution. The military machine was falling into greater and greater disorder. The economic and financial situation, catastrophic enough at the outbreak of the Revolution, had become simply desperate. The failure to achieve any agreement with the Allies worked to the advantage of the Maximalists and Extremists and added impetus to their propaganda. Its effect became more evident every day that passed. At the same time the counter-revolutionary elements in Russia began to lift their heads. And they lifted their heads the higher and the more boldly in proportion as extremism became noisier, more audacious and more successful. There was neither war in any active sense nor any prospect of finishing the war. Russia's state, in short, was sufficient to appal the strongest will, to shake the strongest faith. There seemed no way out.

Yet even at this black hour it was amazing how a marvellous instinct continued to guide and support the Revolution

when the force of logic alone would have failed. I remember how forcibly I was struck at the time by the instinctive and immediate foresight and resource of the revolutionary leaders. Instinct had been the driving power of the Revolution from the outset; it did not fail it now. The most wonderful manifestation of this instinct was the decision then taken by the Executive of the C.W.S.D. to take part in the Provisional Government. That date—May the 6th—when the Executive Committee decided to share the responsibility of Government was perhaps the most fateful day in Russian history. The risk was enormous; and the courage to face it was correspondingly enormous. It meant life or death for New Russia. It gave Lenin's Extremism the chance that it might have prayed for; and in the unhappy event of this new Provisional Government failing to solve the situation it was inevitable that a period of rash social experiment in Russia would follow with its equally inevitable consequences of civil war and collapse, first into anarchy, and then into

despotism. The risk, as I have said, was truly stupendous.

But the effect was to give the Government a new programme and a new determined, courageous, clearly defined and clearly thought-out policy. At the same time the decision of the C.W.S.D. gave the Government a support from the mass of the people which the first Provisional Government did not possess.

The programme of the new Provisional Government was based upon two leading ideas: first, a foreign policy that should rest simultaneously upon a strong, revived, and reorganised army and a determined effort for peace; second, a home policy that would pull the country together economically, financially and politically, and defeat the disorganising tendencies in Russian life. I regret that space does not permit me to speak of the domestic policy of the new Government, its programmes of economic and financial reform and social regeneration. All that I need now say—but I must say it with all the emphasis at my command—is that

this internal salvation of Russia is in fact conditional upon the success of Russia's effort for peace. It is felt by everybody in Russia, and of course by the Government itself in the first place, that the only chance of the Government's saving Russia from internal chaos is the success of its foreign policy—that is to say, its success in bringing the war to a speedy conclusion. Upon that the whole future of Russia is staked.

The way was clear and obvious. A strong army was needed by the Russians to reinforce and dignify its peace programme. Chernov, the leader of the Social Revolutionaries and Minister for Agriculture in the new Government, declared at a Cabinet Council: "Russia must no longer speak to her Allies in the tone of a poor relative, and to enemies with the mien and language of a pauper." At the recent all-Russian Congress of the C.W.S.D. he put it even more forcibly: "Russia must have a strong army to enforce the respect of friends and foes alike." We now see that the thing has been done. Kerensky and

the new Government have done their work well. But let not the offensive be misinterpreted. Let there be no mistake. The offensive is in no way an antithesis to the Russian democracy's struggle for peace. It is, on the contrary, its confirmation. Let me quote the Petrograd correspondent of the *Daily News*, the most clear-sighted and understanding correspondent of any foreign newspaper in Russia. He says: "It is clear that the Coalition Government now recognises that the source of its powers is the C.W.S.D., and reciprocally the Council, as at present constituted, is determined to support the Government by all possible means and, further, to support the Government's policy of hastening peace by activity in the field as well as by diplomacy. It supports the offensive because it believes that it will help its diplomacy. Its own permanence and that of the Government depend on the justification of that belief."

The same truth is expressed by Mr. Harold Williams in one of his latest despatches.

"It must be remembered," he says, "that the clearer the aims of the war, the more distinct and positive the utterances of the Allies, the more certain the soldiers are that the whole Coalition is fighting sincerely for the pure ideal of liberty, the more powerful will be the offensive impulse of the Russian army."

* * *

Russia's danger to-day is nervousness. The whole national life is in a state of nerves. It is nervously overstrained and apprehensive. The country feels itself on the verge of ruin, or as Skobelyef (Socialist Member of the Government) put it the other day, "Russia is balancing on a razor-edge." In fact Russia is living only on her nervous excitement. The new offensive illustrates this most clearly.* It has been a miracle. Yet there is evidently too much exaltation and not enough of that calm confidence that one would like. The army fights with amazing vehemence and

* Mr. Farbman's lecture was delivered at the time of Brussiloff's offensive and before the regrettable breakdown of morale in Galicia.

with almost excessive impetuosity of attack. This high-pitched impulsiveness of Russian national life is fraught with danger, because the higher the nervous tension and uplift, the greater may be the reaction afterwards. The Russian Revolution and the Russian Revolutionary army need all the sympathy and the active co-operation of the Allied democracies. The nervous tension of Russian national life should be cured.

The reason for this nervous overstrain is that the Russian Revolution feels isolated, and that the prospect looks dark. Imagine the position of the Russian democracy. The indefinite prolongation of the war means a vista of internal collapse and catastrophe. Yet hope of a speedy ending of the war diminishes every day.

The Russian democracy is extending its hands with passionate yearning to its Allies' democracies. But its outstretched hands remain hanging in the air. Democratic Russia calls upon the Western democracies: "Try to understand the tragic position of Revolutionary Russia. Try to

understand the great mission of the Russian Revolution. Do not drive Russia to despair by your cold scepticism. Do not isolate Russia. Draw nearer to Russian democracy and co-operate with her in isolating German Junkerdom and pan-Germanism."

The Russian Revolution is a potent weapon. It is capable of being thrust like a wedge into German unity and of destroying that "*burgfrieden*" upon which German *morale* depends. Unity of the Allies on such a single moral front is the best means, and perhaps the only means, of bringing about a speedy decision and an early and satisfactory peace.

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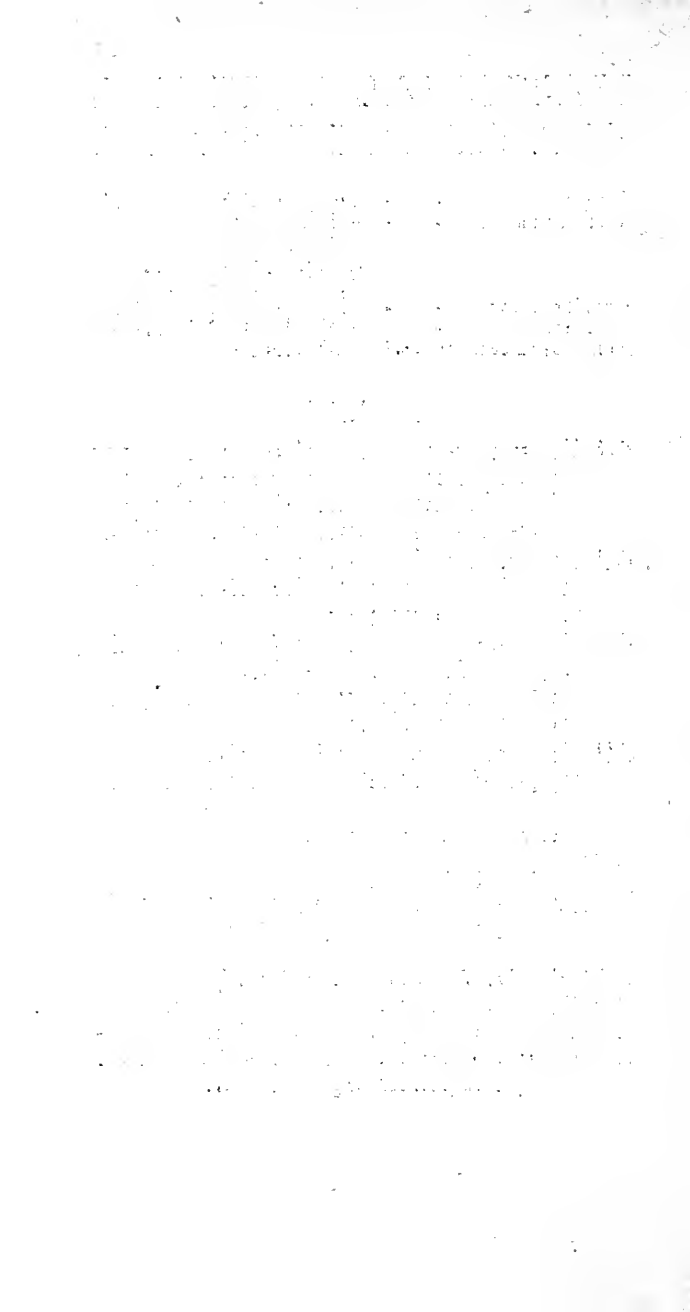
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